

AMSD Calendar

MAY 4, 2006

Executive Committee Meeting, 7 a.m.
TIES Building, St. Paul

MAY 11, 2006

Board of Directors Meeting, 7 a.m.
Grand Hall
TIES Building, St. Paul

MAY 18, 2006

Legislative Committee Meeting, 7 a.m.
TIES Building, St. Paul

MAY 25, 2006

Board of Directors Meeting, 7 a.m.
Grand Hall
TIES Building, St. Paul



Students in the high-mileage car class at Simley High School are preparing for competition at the Brainerd International Speedway.

From the Chair

In my first column as chair of AMSD, I wish I had better news to report. It's no secret that the Legislature has been more focused on stadiums and other issues this session than on the continued needs of E-12 education. There seems to be a general feeling among legislators that they took care of education last year. There is little recognition that most metro school districts are facing continuing budget challenges in the face of rapidly rising energy cost increases and declining enrollment.

So, what can we do as AMSD members? First, it is imperative that we communicate regularly with our legislators. They need to be aware of the challenges and needs of our schools and our learners. We must also make sure our legislators understand that their obligation to fund our schools is not an every other year proposition, and that public education does not operate in a vacuum. Schools are not immune to the impact of rising energy costs and other inflationary cost pressures.

When I was at the Capitol recently I saw the

Inver Grove Heights Community Schools: Have you looked at us lately?

Great things are happening in the Inver Grove Heights Community Schools! The Board of Education is committed to reinstating programming for students at the middle school level, new programs have been added at the high school level, elementary class size averages have remained low, and the community approved a bond referendum for construction at Hilltop Elementary and IGH Middle School and remodeling throughout the district.

This year marked the first year of district use of the computer-based Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment designed by Northwest Evaluation Association. Students in grades two through eight and some departments and special programs are using the test to measure student achievement in reading, math and written language. The MAP assessment allows students to test to their achievement level rather than to their current grade level. This formative data is used to design classroom instruction within 72 hours of the test completion

(continued on page 3)

(continued on page 2)

AMSD's Mission

To advocate for state education policy that enables metropolitan school districts to improve student learning.



Association of
Metropolitan School Districts

Amendments Would Dedicate General Fund Revenue

The House and Senate have passed different versions of a constitutional amendment that, if passed by the voters, would earmark a portion of sales tax revenues to environmental and arts programs. Amazingly, there has been very little discussion about the impact such a proposal would have on education and other programs that are dependent on general fund revenues. Conferees from the House and Senate will now meet to address differences in the amended versions each body has approved. The major difference between the House and Senate proposals is that the Senate would increase the existing sales tax and dedicate the new revenue to environmental and arts programs, while the House proposal would dedicate a portion of the existing sales tax revenue.

Opponents of the proposal question whether programs funded through the general fund – including public education – will be adversely impacted by this proposal which would leave a \$140 million hole in the general fund. Furthermore, a constitutional amendment that would dedicate revenue from the Minnesota Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) to transportation and transit will already appear on the ballot in No-

vember. If passed, this amendment would dedicate \$300 million in revenue that currently goes to the general fund to transit and transportation.

Minnesota has not traditionally appropriated funds using constitutional dedication, with the exception of the gas tax, which dates originally to an amendment passed by voters in 1928. Although the apportionment of the gas tax has changed since, Minnesota has not in modern memory removed revenues from the general fund and earmarked them, ad infinitum, to a dedicated purpose.

Other states offer more recent experience in the management of dedicated mandates once a referendum is passed. Missouri, in particular, has used this funding mechanism at least twice in the last 30 years. In 1979, voters dedicated 1/8 of one percent of its state sales tax to the Department of Conservation, and in 2004, an amendment passed requiring diversion of the majority of Missouri motor vehicle sales tax collections to the State Road Bond Fund. The 2004 measure is expected to shift \$73.2 million this fiscal year — an amount anticipated to rise to \$187 million by fiscal year 2009.

The nonpartisan Missouri Budget Project opposed the recent amendment, arguing that earmarking funds, regardless of the specific uses involved, represents hazardous policy. Such dedication can radically restrict future Legislatures in the event revenues are uncertain or flagging. “Diverting funding from current critical needs such as the education of Missouri children is not the way to meet transportation needs,” reads a related policy paper.

How will Minnesota state policy makers address the hole that will be created in the general fund? Are they willing to support a tax increase? If not, are they willing to identify which programs they will cut? Considering the impact this measure could have on public education and other program areas that depend on general fund revenues, such a discussion needs to take place. The citizens of Minnesota deserve to know how public education and other programs would be impacted by dedicating a significant portion of general fund revenue to transportation, transit, environmental programs and the arts prior to voting on these questions in November.

From the Chair...

close relationships that rural legislators seem to have with their schools. Although some metro school leaders are closer to their legislators than others, it seems that in general we are not as connected to our legislators as we could be. As board members and superintendents, I believe it is our responsibility to change that.

In these last weeks of the session, let's make an extra effort to reach out to our legislators and make sure they hear and understand the following important messages:

➤ Urge your legislators to support the Senate funding targets of \$35 million for K-12 Education and \$23 million for Early Childhood Education. These targets would allow for some much needed financial relief for our schools.

➤ Ask your legislators to OPPOSE any new unfunded mandates. The biggest new mandate being proposed is legislation that would create a mandatory statewide health insurance pool for school district employees.

➤ Encourage your legislators to support legislation that would reverse the

increase in the operating capital levy that was approved last year. While this change would be revenue neutral for school districts, this education property tax relief is important for school districts that rely heavily on passing operating referendums to meet the basic educational needs of their students.

Jane Eckert, school board member from St. Anthony-New Brighton, is chair of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts.

Inver Grove Heights Community Schools...

and measure individual student achievement growth over time.

Courses that have been added to the secondary program include: health for students in grades six through eight; a business education course, in which students focus on keyboarding,



Fourth-grade pen pals from Cherokee Heights Elementary School in St. Paul visit a fourth-grade classroom at Hilltop Elementary. The classroom partnership is sponsored by East Metro Integration District 6067 (EMID).

word processing and the use of PowerPoint, has been added at grade eight; advanced communication is an Advanced Placement course for students in grade eleven; and super-mileage vehicle competition is a new course offering for students taking industrial arts at Simley High School. In addition, proposals are in the works for the addition of two more Advanced Placement courses next year, AP Spanish and AP Studio Art at Simley, bringing the total number of

Advanced Placement offerings to eight.

The College Board's Pre-Advanced Placement program is another new addition to the school program. The Pre-AP program is a set of instructional strategies to engage students in active, high-level and rigorous learning. These strategies allow teachers to build and deliver a rigorous curriculum to meet the needs of all students, starting in middle school and moving into the high school. With the premise that all students can perform at rigorous academic levels, the goal of Pre-AP is to increase student achievement for all students. The Advanced Placement Program, already in place at Simley, should see a noticeable increase in student participation and success on the National AP exams.



Arctic and Antarctica explorer Ann Bancroft regaled students at Salem Hills Elementary with tales of her adventures.



Students in the eighth-grade computer technology class learn keyboarding, the Macintosh operating system, word processing and how to use spreadsheet and presentation software.

Preliminary work on the building bond projects has begun. The current sixth-graders and middle school administration have moved into temporary quarters as their areas of the middle school are prepared for demolition. Construction of the seventh-grade classroom wing and middle school administrative areas will begin this summer, as will construction of additional classroom space at Hilltop Elementary. Elementary construction and remodeling will be completed before the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year, with the middle school projects scheduled for completion in April 2008.

For more information, see the district website at www.invergrove.k12.mn.us.

This month's district spotlight was submitted by Pat Williams, Communications Coordinator for Inver Grove Heights Community Schools.

Members of AMSD include: Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville/Eagan/Savage, Chaska, East Metro Integration District 6067, Eden Prairie, Edina, Elk River, Fridley, Hopkins, Intermediate District 287, Inver Grove Heights, Mahtomedi, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, Mounds View, North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale, Orono, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Roseville, Shakopee, South St. Paul, Spring Lake Park, St. Anthony/New Brighton, St. Louis Park, St. Paul, Wayzata, West Metro Program-Joint Powers School District 6069 and West St. Paul.